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NOTES

ON SOME OF

THE PRINCIPAL PICTURES

EXHIBITED IN THE ROOMS OF THE

ROYAL ACADEMY,

THE OLD AND NEW

SOCIETIES OF PAINTERS IN WATER COLOURS,

THE SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS,

AND

THE FRENCH EXHIBITION.

No. V.—1859.

By JOHN RUSKIN, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "MODERN PAINTERS," "STONES OF VENICE," "SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE," "ELEMENTS OF DRAWING," ETC., ETC.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

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MR. RUSKIN'S NOTES

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PREFACE.

I HOPE henceforward to do without preface ; for the real state of our schools in any given year cannot be described in few words, and after the most earnest analysis of the causes of advance or decline, the real result will always be inexplicable. Great painters will every now and then appear when no one expects them ; or perhaps disappear suddenly through trap doors without any visible reason for their exit ; and the critic can only congratulate in simplicity, or lament in amazement. The present Exhibition shows steady advance among the younger students ; the more experienced masters, whether Academic or pre-Raphaelite, are either absent or indolent ; but I have never seen the Academy walls show so high an average of good work.

NOTES,

ETC. ETC.

EXHIBITION OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

12. Reminiscences of the Ball. (G. D. Leslie.)

It must be a great delight to Mr. Leslie to see his son do such good work as this. There is not a prettier little piece of painting on the walls, and very few half so pretty. All the accessories, too, are at once quaint and graceful: showing an enjoyment of elegance in form (even down to the design of the frame of the picture, and the bars of the chair,) which is very rare among the young painters of the rising school. This grace of fancy is shown no less in the little Chinese subject by the same artist (351), which, however, is not quite so thoroughly painted. I shall look anxiously for Mr. Leslie's work next year, for he seems to have truly the power of composition, and that is the gift of gifts if it be rightly used. He colours very well already.

13. A Boy in Florentine Costume. (J. R. Hay.)

Very masterly and complete in effect, and like the Val d'Arno: so also its companion, No. 173.

But the intention of this latter is mistaken. An English boy, however luxuriously bred, has usually twenty times the firmness in his face that an Italian one has. Italian boys are beautiful—full of vitality and roguery; lazy, and, on the whole, well fed, wherever I have seen them. There is more misery of an outward and physical kind in a couple of London back-streets than in a whole Italian town. Mental degradation, not physical suffering, constitutes the slavery of Italy,—both constitute that of England. Italian slavery is infinitely grander than ours. The souls of Italy at least need iron bars to bind them; ours need only the threads of purses.

15. The Vale of Rest. (J. E. Millais, A.)

I have no doubt the beholder is considerably offended at first sight of this picture—justifiably so, considering what might once have been hoped for from its painter; but unjustifiably, if the offence taken prevents his staying by it; for it deserves his study. “We are offended by it.” Granted. Perhaps the painter did not mean us to be pleased. It may be that he supposed we should have been offended if we had seen the real nun digging her real grave;* that she and it might have appeared to us not altogether pathetic, romantic, or sublime; but only strange, or horrible; and that he chooses to fasten this sensation upon us rather than any other.

* I believe, in point of fact, nuns neither dig their own graves, nor erect tombstones: but we will take the picture on its own terms.

It is a temper into which many a good painter has fallen before now. You would not find it a pleasant thing to be left at twilight in the church of the Madonna of the Garden at Venice, with the last light falling on the skeletons—half alive, dreamy, stammering skeletons—shaking the dust off their ribs, in Tintoret's Last Judgment. Perhaps even you might not be at your ease before one or two pale crucifixes which I remember of Giotto's and other not mean men, where the dark red runlets twine and trickle from the feet down to the skull at the root of the cross. Many an ugly spectre and ghastly face has been painted by the gloomier German workmen before now, and been in some sort approved by us; nay, there is more horror by far, of a certain kind, in modern French works—Vernet's Eylau and Plague, and such like—which we do not hear any one declaim against—(nay, which seem to meet a large division of public taste,) than in this picture which so many people call "frightful."

Why *so* frightful? Is it not because it is so nearly beautiful?—Because the dark green field, and windless trees, and purple sky might be so lovely to persons unconcerned about their graves?

Or is it that the faces are so ugly? You would have liked them better to be fair faces, such as would grace a drawing-room, and the grave to be dug in prettier ground—under a rose-bush or willow, and in turf set with violets—nothing like a bone visible as one threw the mould out. So, it would have been a sweet piece of convent sentiment.

I am afraid that it is a good deal more like real convent sentiment as it is. Death—confessed for king before his time, asserts, so far as I have seen, some authority over such places; either unperceived, and then the worst, in drowsy unquickenings of the soul; or felt and terrible, pouring out his white ashes upon the heart—ashes that burn with cold. If you think what the kind of persons who have strength of conviction enough to give up the world, might have done for the world had they *not* given it up: and how the King of Terror must rejoice when he wins for himself another soul that might have gone forth to calm the earth; and folds his wide, white wings over it for ever:—He also gathering his children together;—and how those white sarcophagi—towered and belfried, each with his companies of living dead, gleam still so multitudinous among the mountain pyramids of the fairest countries of the earth: places of silence for their sweet voices; places of binding for their faithfullest hands; places of fading for their mightiest intelligences:—you may, perhaps, feel also, that so great wrong cannot be lovely in the near aspect of it; and that if this very day, at evening, we were allowed to see what the last clouds of twilight glow upon in some convent garden of the Apennines, we might leave the place with some such horror as this picture will leave upon us; not all of it noble horror, but in some sort repulsive and ignoble.

It is, for these reasons, to me, a great work: nevertheless, part of its power is not to the painter's

praise. The crude painting is here in a kind of harmony with the expression of discord which was needed. But it is crude—not in momentary compliance with the mood which prompted this wild design; but in apparent consistency of decline from the artist's earlier ways of labour. Pass to his other picture—the “Spring,” and we find the colour not less abrupt, though more vivid.

And when we look at this fierce and rigid orchard,—this angry blooming—petals, as it were, of japanned brass; and remember the lovely wild roses and flowers scattered on the stream in the “Ophelia;” there is, I regret to say, no ground for any diminution of the doubt which I expressed two years since, respecting the future career of a painter who can fall thus strangely beneath himself.

The power has not yet left him. With all its faults, and they are grievous, this is still mighty painting: nothing else is as strong, or approximately as strong, within these walls. But it is a phenomenon, so far as I know, unparalleled hitherto in art-history, that any workman capable of so much should rest content with so little. All former art, by men of any intellect, has been wrought, under whatever limitations of time, as well as the painter could do it; evidently with an effort to reach something beyond what was actually done: if a sketch, the sketch showed a straining towards completion; if a picture, it showed a straining to a higher perfection; but here, we have a careless and insolent indication of things that might be—not the splendid promise of a

grand impatience, but the scrabbled remnant of a scornfully abandoned aim.

And this wildness of execution is strangely associated with the distortion of feature which more or less has been sought for by this painter from his earliest youth; just as it was by Martin Schongauer and Mantegna. In the first picture (from Keat's *Isabella*) which attracted public attention, the figure in the foreground writhed in violence of constrained rage: in the picture of the "Holy Family at Nazareth," the Virgin's features were contorted in sorrow over a wounded hand; violent ugliness of feature spoiled a beautiful arrangement of colour in the "Return of the Dove," and disturbed a powerful piece of dramatic effect in the "Escape from the Inquisition." And in this present picture, the unsightliness of some of the faces, and the preternatural grimness of others, with the fierce colour and angular masses of the flowers above, force upon me a strange impression, which I cannot shake off—that this is an illustration of the song of some modern Dante, who, at the first entrance of an inferno for English society, had found, carpeted with ghostly grass, a field of penance for young ladies; where girl-blossoms, who had been vainly gay, or treacherously amiable, were condemned to recline in reprobation under red-hot apple blossom, and sip scalding milk out of a poisoned porringer.

40. The Night before Naseby. (A. L. Egg, A.)

An interesting contribution to the store of hints for better understanding of English history which

painters and poets are now continually throwing out for us. This scene is, however, hardly strange enough to have the look of reality: it is what we should, or could, all imagine about Cromwell; while most likely, if we had really been able to look into his tent the night before Naseby, the look of him would have been something different from what we should have imagined. A picture which is not at first a little wonderful to us, can hardly at last be true to us.

63. A Huff. (J. Philip.)

Full of powerful and dexterous painting; but ungraceful, and slightly vulgar. This last character is given chiefly by the brilliancy of petticoat and chenille, prevailing at once over passions, faces, and landscape. It is, indeed, quite right to elaborate details; but not the ignoblest details first and best. All! or none. If chenille, then, *à fortiori*—orange bough and blossom; if blue petticoat, *à fortiori*—blue sky. The orange tree, it might be said, would have spoiled the faces if it had been made out? Then put something behind them that will not spoil them, but always paint it well, whatever it is.

95. The late Captain Sir Charles Hotham.

(G. Richmond, A.)

This is a very noble portrait; full of simple and manly character; vigorous and complete in workmanship: but all the best of it is here lost, and what deficiency exists in its dark colour brought out, both by its height above the eye, and by the neighbourhood

of the white dresses in the portraits beneath it ; and thus a great injustice is done to the painter, and a real loss (for it is a serious one not to see this admirably wrought head better) caused to the public, merely for the sake of the symmetries of the saloon ; that a diagonal line of general in No. 95, may balance a diagonal line of lady in No. 69. In the Louvre, at this moment, the French use their best old pictures, the treasures of Europe, in the same way, and hang Titian's and Rubens' portraits to balance each other, forty feet above the eye. Such treatment of great pictures is simply, and in the full sense of the word, "savage ;" such things cannot be done, whether by us here, or by the French in the Louvre, but in a clownish ignorance of the meaning of the word "picture ;" and of the entire value and purpose of painting. And, indeed, when the pictures are wholly precious and perfect, like the Titian with the red capped St. Joseph, which the French have hung high out of sight in the Louvre, or like the Sir Joshua's Holy Family which we have thrust into the darkest room in Marlborough House, "clownish" is not a strong enough word for the mischief ; "savage" is the accurate expression. A clown buys ornaments for his cottage chimney-piece, without much understanding of their merit as works of art, but at least he puts them where he can see them. But your savage, to whom, after much polite and instructive conversation about England, thinking to deepen the impression on his mind, you make a present of miniatures of the Queen and Prince

Albert, presently attaches the Queen to one ear, and Prince Albert to the other, and dances round you with a howl. We two great nations, French and English, “wear” our noble pictures precisely in this manner.

It is to be hoped that in the arrangement of the building about to be raised for the occupation of the Academy, the fact may be at last acknowledged, that a picture which is worth seeing at all is worth seeing well; that a picture gallery needs space, but not height—and rational sequence, not overwhelming concentration, of its treasures.

The portrait of the Dean of Westminster, No. 510, shows Mr. Richmond’s power more satisfactorily.

113. Clarkson Stanfield, Esq., R.A. (D. Macnee.)

A good portrait; only Mr. Stanfield’s eyes are more piercing, even in general, and must be especially so when he is sketching. And surely the portrait of a landscape painter ought to have a background. Velasquez always allows his admirals a little sea; might not Mr. Stanfield have had at least a rock and a wave.

135. Waiting for the Ferry Boat.—Upper Egypt. (J. F. Lewis, A.)

Well, of course, it is very nice. Housings and camels—palm trees—clouds, and Sheik. But waiting for a ferry-boat is dull work; and are we never to get out of Egypt any more? nor to perceive the existence of any living creatures but Arabs and camels? Is

there nothing paintable in England, nor Spain, nor Italy? Or, in the East, if we *must* live in the East, is no landscape ever visible but a dead level of mud raised two feet above a slow stream. I have heard of lovely hills and convents at Athos—of green trees and flowing waters at Damascus—of mighty rocks at Petra and Mount Hor—of wonderful turrets and enamelled walls at Cairo; surely the mosaic of a marble turret is as pretty a thing to paint as a camel-housing; and it would take no more trouble to draw the ridges of an Arabian mountain than the folds of that everlasting Sheik's cloak! We go to this melancholy Egypt through plague, and mosquitos, and misery of every sort—and all we see for our pains is a camel with a fine carpet on his back. Cannot we see that any day at the Zoological Gardens? But the Sphinx, and the temples, and the hieroglyphics, and the mirage, and simoom; and everything that we want to know about, and that one would be so thankful to have painted properly;—shall we never have any of these? It is too unkind of you, Mr. Lewis; and it serves you quite right to be put up there, where nobody can see a bit of your good work, but only your dull subject. But what is this we have got put underneath you, which looks like a tobacconist's sign; a valuable work it is to be hoped—let us see.

137. The Fusee. (A. Cooper, R.A.)

The sublime of English art, truly! A lake, with ingenious white touches at the edges, to mark it

from the mountains; some rocks of leather; sky-blue heather; wooden-headed people, displaying themselves in the athletic exercise of smoking, and a pool of water, with vertical reflections of sloping lines! A superb art lesson for the line of the Academy—heroic and optical at once; it is interesting, especially, to see that, in the present state of British science, one may write R.A. after one's name, yet not be able to paint a gutter.

160. The Church of Sta. Maria della Salute.
(D. Roberts, R.A.)

My dear Mr. Roberts, *is* this like a church built of white Carrara marble? La Salute is verily as white as snow in some places; black-spotted or ochre-spotted in others; but delicate and lovely everywhere. And then the gondoliers! still always where they couldn't possibly row! It would be very comfortable for gondoliers if they might stand in the middle of the boat close by the canopy; but to their sorrow, sometimes to their misfortune, they must stand far back, poised on the point of the giddy stern. I say "sometimes to their misfortune," for, as if specially to illustrate Mr. Leslie's* declaration, in defence of Canaletto against some fault-finding of mine, that the water "as it approached the houses was sheltered from the breeze, my strongest gondolier was blown off his perch into the canal at my own door one day, just opposite this very church, and had nearly been brained against the doorstep.

* Handbook for Young Painters, p. 269.

I much regret Mr. Roberts' abandonment of his old picturesque subjects for these severe ones. He had a great gift of expressing the ins and outs of Spanish balconies and roofs, and the hollow work of complex tracery, and all his skill of this kind is now passing away into formal architectural drawing in brown and gray. His old painting of the spires of Burgos Cathedral—of its turreted chapter-house—the tombs of Ferdinand and Isabella—the towers and courts of the Alhambra, &c., involved points of interest and displays of skill which none of his subjects at present either contain or admit; while their generally smaller size prevented the painter's wearying at his work, and enabled us to have five or six subjects each year instead of two.

165. Mary Magdalen. (J. R. Herbert, R.A.)

Very beautiful, and an interesting example of the noble tendency of modern religious art to conceive scenes as they really in probability occurred; not in merely artistic modification or adaptation.

The picture tells its story sufficiently, and needs no comment. It is not of high artistic merit, but a sincere and gentle conception, adequately, and therefore very touchingly, expressed.

167. "Just as the Twig is Bent."

(W. Mulready, R.A.)

I see that this picture has been depreciatingly spoken of in several of the journals. I think unjustly so. It is as good as Mr. Mulready's work

usually is. I had occasion last year to point out the general defect of that work—namely, that the painter is evidently thinking only of himself and his drawing—never caring the least about what he has to draw; of which, therefore, he misses precisely the most valuable characters, and succeeds in using more skill in painting Nothing than any painter ever spent before on that subject.

If the trees in the background are supposed to be typical of education, they ought to have been better grown. Mr. Mulready's trees are often supposed by artists to be well drawn, merely because they are well *rounded*. But they are, nevertheless, mannered in execution, and false in tree anatomy.

190. Barley Harvest on the Welsh Coast.

(C. P. Knight.)

A delightful subject, forcibly, because harmoniously, rendered, though without any subtlety of execution. I am glad to observe how much the public enjoy a piece of plain fact like this, plainly told; and how they rejoice in their gradual discovery that ground may be golden and sea blue, no less than brown and gray.

211. Jeanie Deans and Queen Caroline.

(C. R. Leslie, R.A.)

The more I learn of art, the more respect I feel for Mr. Leslie's painting, as such; and for the way it brings out the expressional result he requires.

Given, a certain quantity of oil colour to be laid with one touch of pencil, so as to produce at once the subtlest and largest expressional result possible, and there is no man now living who seems to me to come at all near Mr. Leslie, his work being, in places, equal to Hogarth for decision, and here and there a little lighter and more graceful (Hogarth always laying his colour somewhat in daubs and spots). But I am obliged to write above, "the result he (Mr. Leslie) requires," as being very completely distinguished from the result that other people might possibly require. So long, indeed, as Mr. Leslie is dealing only with delicate, lady-like, or gentleman-like expression, he is a consummately faithful artist. I cannot help referring once more to his exquisite *Belinda* and her lover, in his "Rape of the Lock," as types of all that can be asked in such painting; and in this picture before us—the Queen,—and still more the dark-robed Lady Suffolk, are quite beautiful; as also in No. 152, *Lady Percy*. But *Jeanie*, here! and *Harry*, there!! Alas, the day! Examine the two pictures well; they are among the most instructive that ever yet appeared on the Academy walls, in showing the possibility of entering completely into the spirit of the gracefulnesses of society, without the power of conceiving Heroism. To a certain extent, the mind of Reynolds was of this stamp. He could conceive a most refined lord or lady, but not a saint or Madonna; and his best hero, *Lord Heathfield*, is but an obstinate old English gentleman after all.

Gainsborough takes very nearly the same view of us. Hogarth laughs at or condemns us. Leslie, accustomed to high English life, supposes that this was Harry Percy's way of wearing his spurs. Is it not a rather strange matter, that our seers or painters, contemplating the English nation, cannot, all of them put together, paint an English hero? Nothing more than an English gentleman in an obstinate state of mind about keys; with an expression which I can conceive so exceedingly stout a gentleman of that age as occasionally putting on, even respecting the keys of the cellaret. Pray, consider of it a little, good visitors to the Royal Academy in the afternoon, whether it is altogether the painter's fault, or anybody else's!

237. A Maltese Xebec, on the Rocks of Procida.
(C. Stanfield, R.A.)

It is rather singular that the castle of Isehia, which appears in the distance of this picture, is almost the only piece of really picturesque architecture which is to be found on the Academy walls this year.

It is not, perhaps, one of Mr. Stanfield's best works, but his mountain forms are always true and bold; and after infinite and infinitesimal calls upon one's sympathy from leaves and dragonflies, one is glad of a piece of solid rock and wall, about which one is not expected to "feel" anything particular.

310. Sunday in the Backwoods. (T. Faed.)

This will of course be a very popular picture, and deserves to be so, having every claim to our observance which kindly feeling and steady average painting can give it. It does not possess any first-rate qualities; but has no serious faults, and much gentle pathos. The figure of the healthy sister, looking up, seems to me the best.

316. The Rose Garland. (W. C. T. Dobson.)

Evidently a most faithful portrait (colour only excepted) of a dear, good little girl—such an one as may be seen often enough, Heaven be praised! at cottage-doors in England, or in France, or in Germany, or in Switzerland, or, I suppose, in Sweden. South of the Alps or Pyrenees, or east of the Carpathians, one finds that kind of face no more. What does that peculiar northern sweetness consist in, which never showed itself, even to Giotto, nor to Raphael?—their beauty being of another kind wholly; more pensive, less wise, and less active.

329. Felice Ballarin reciting Tasso.

(F. Goodall, A.)

This is a great advance beyond all Mr. Goodall's former work; it is entirely higher in aim, and deeper in rendering of character: the subject interesting; the faces, for the most part, evidently portraits, and good portraits (especially those dark ones of the men in the background), the colour, in some separate portions, rich and good, showing qualities which

never before appeared to be in the least sought for, much less reached by the painter. In fact, Mr. Goodall has been looking at Titian instead of Wilkie, and that makes a large difference in what will be got by looking.

Nevertheless the picture is far from right yet; and its failure involves an important principle, which it may be of use to state generally, at a time when nearly all our younger painters are making those vigorous efforts in new directions. It is wholly impossible to paint an effect of sunlight truly. It never has been done, and never will be. Sunshine is brighter than any mortal can paint, and all resemblances to it must be obtained by sacrifice. In order to obtain a popularly effective sunlight, colour must be sacrificed. De Hoogh, Cuyp, Claude, Both, Richard Wilson, and all other masters of sunshine, invariably reach their most telling effects by harmonies of gold with gray, giving up the blues, rubies, and freshest greens. Turner did the same in his earlier work. Modern pre-Raphaelites, and Turner in his later work, reached magnificent effects of sunshine colour, but of a kind necessarily unintelligible to the ordinary observer (as true sunshine colour will always be, since it is impossible to paint it of the pitch of light which has true relation to its shadows). And thus the "Sun of Venice," and the "Slave Ship," with Hunt's "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Stray Sheep," and such others, failed of almost all their due effect on the popular mind.

In landscape, nevertheless, to which sunshine is often necessary as part of its expression, the sacrifice must be made; and the public will, in time, understand it. But in figures, sunshine is rarely a necessary part of the expression; and all figure pictures in which it is introduced must be, to a certain extent, offensive. The obstinate endeavours of the pre-Raphaelites to get vermilion transparencies and purple shadows into flesh, have been one of the principal and most justifiable grounds of the long opposition to them. And all great work whatsoever, of the highest school, refuses sunlight; and admits only a kind of glowing twilight, like that of Italy, a quarter of an hour after sunset.

Under these circumstances, choice must be made firmly and completely. Give up your sunlight, and you may get Titian's twilight. Give up your Titianesque depth, and you may, by thorough study from nature, get some approximation to noonday flame. But you cannot have both. Mr. Goodall has attempted both, and, of course, missed both—chiefly his sunshine, from mere inattention to its effects. For instance, the woman sitting on the right, with the green petticoat, has her lap in sunshine, her head in shade. Whatever light touches the head would be reflected light, and it would be reflected from the ground, shining strongly under her brows and on the lower part of her face; instead of which there is a shadow under the brow, exactly as if she were sitting in a room with ordinary daylight entering from above through a window.

The picture is full of grammatical error of the same kind—the kind of error which in these days of earnest effort and accurate science, artists should get quit of with their long-clothes and spelling-books; whereas now, to the middle or even the close of life, they remain encumbered among petty misunderstandings, and wondering why they cannot make their art beautiful, when they have never taken the pains to make it right. There are, of course, just three simple stages of study to be gone through by every student. He has first to learn to draw a solid body in perfect light and shade, without sunlight. Then to paint it, also without sunlight; taking subjects that will give no trouble about their expression or sentiment. Then to put it into sunshine, and paint it there also, until he knows precisely the kind of difference in treatment required for it. And then—not till then—he may be able partially to colour the human face.

All this is just as simple and rational in method of procedure as practising scales in music before we try to play sonatas. But we always try to learn our painting upside down.

368. The Evening Song. (A. Rankling.)

A pretty thought, but not well enough painted. The sky has been caught from nature; but with too little precision; the perspective of the retiring ranks of cloud being missed.

Are our village children taught at present to sing

the evening hymn in such an obstreperous manner as to frighten the geese?

369. Luff, Boy! (J. C. Hook, A.)

War with France? It may be; and they say good ships are building at Cherbourg. War with Russia? That also is conceivable; and the Russians invent machines that explode under water by means of knobs. War with the fiend in ourselves? That may not so easily come to pass, he and we being in close treaty hitherto, yet perhaps in good time may be looked for. And against enemies, foreign or internal, French, Slavonic, or demoniac, what arms have we to count upon? I hear of good artillery practice at Woolwich,—of new methods of sharpening sabres invented by Sikhs,—of a modern condition of the blood of Nessus, which sets sails on fire, and makes an end of Herculean ships, like Phœnixes. All which may perhaps be well, or perhaps ill, for us. But, if our enemies want to judge of our proved weapons and armour, let them come and look here. Bare head, bare fist, bare foot, and blue jacket. If these will not save us—nothing will.

A glorious picture—most glorious—“Hempen bridle, and horse of tree.” Nay, rather, baeks of the blue horses, foam-fetlocked, rearing beside us as we ride, tossing their tameless crests, with deep-drawn thunder in their overtaking tread. I wonder if Mr. Hook when he drew that boy thought of the Elgin marbles; the helmetless, unsworded, unarmoured men of Marathon. I think not: the

likeness is too lovely to be conscious: it is all the more touching. They also, the men of Marathon, horsemen riding upon horses, given them of the Sea God. The earth struck by the trident takes such shape—a white wave, with its foaming mane and its crested head, made living for them.

And the quiet steersman, too, with his young brow knit, to whom father and brother are trusted—and more than they. I would we had such faithful arms, however feeble, at all helms.

Infinite thanks, Mr. Hook, for this;—for our Brook of Human Life also (250), and our Hours of listless Sway on gentle Wave (493). All of them beautiful. The distant landscape in that brook scene is one of the sweetest ever found by painter—for found it evidently is—not composed; as well as Mr. Redgrave's beautiful distance in 218.

390. Barley Harvest. (H. C. Whaite.)

Very exquisite in nearly every respect; perhaps, take it all in all, the most covetable bit of landscape of this year, and showing good promise, it seems to me, if the painter does not overwork himself needlessly. The execution of the whole by minute and similar touches is a mistake; certain textures need to be so produced, and certain complexities of form, but the work is never good unless it varies with every part of the subject, and is different in method, according to the sort of surface or form required. Nothing finished can be done without labour; but a picture can hardly be more injured than by the quantity of

labour in it which is lost. Uncontributive toil is one of the forms of ruin.

Mr. Whaite's drawing, 1,001, is also very lovely in conception, and right in form of cloud. It is slightly affected by the same error as the oil-painting. Compare with it the interesting study opposite, by Mr. A. W. Hunt (997), entirely well meant, but suffering under the same oppression of plethoric labour. I do not often, in the present state of the English school, think it advisable to recommend "breadth," but assuredly both Mr. Whaite and Mr. Hunt, if they wish to do themselves justice, ought to give up colour for a little while, and work with nothing but very ill-made charcoal, which will not cut to a point.

While we are examining these minor landscapes, it is worth while returning to the west room to glance at Mr. Raven's "Saintfoin in bloom," (574,) which is more easy in touch, and very harmonious in the light and shade of the figures; and at Mr. Oake's richly, but vainly wrought foreground, with nothing beyond it. (525.)

Mr. Boyce's "East Lynn" (682) is of higher temper. It is curious how few people seem to feel the solemn difference between sun and shade—in the breadth of both, which he has endeavoured to render there. Many other studies of great interest may be found scattered on the walls, in which, while there is much to be admired, this is generally to be regretted, that the painters, not being able to do their work entirely well, think to make progress by doing a great quantity of work moderately well, which will by no

means answer the purpose. We cannot learn to paint leaves by painting trees-full; nor grass by painting fields-full. Learning to paint one leaf rightly is better than constructing a whole forest of leaf definitions.

441. God's Gothic. (Miss A. Blunden.)

An entirely earnest and very notable study. It looks hard at first (and indeed *is* a little hard at last); but the appearance of too conspicuous green in the sea, which principally causes the harshness, will be found to diminish after a steady look; the fact being that the sea is often of this colour, only the bright sunlight of nature, which no painting can equal, accounts for it to our sensations. But if Miss Blunden can make her handling a little more tender, the colour may be as bright without looking wrong. She has tried hard, not without fair success, to express the rise of the wave—hardly visible in the long swell—till the foam shows at its edge; the wet shingle is also very good; the boat well drawn; and the beds of pointed “Gothic” wonderfully true in bend, as well as various in colour.

480. The Burgesses of Calais. (H. Holiday.)

A well-conceived and interesting scene: the face of the knight successful; that of the wife is a little beyond the painter's strength. It is a fair representation of the class of pictures now produced in numbers by the advancing school, which, with considerable merit, have the general demerit of making

us feel in an instant that they would never have been painted had not others shown how; and the greater demerit of slightly blunting the enjoyment of the work of original men. Nevertheless, in every school these engrafted pictures must exist; and it is a cause for sincere congratulation when the habit which is becoming derivatively universal, is to read human nature and history with sympathy for nobleness, and desire for truth.

492. The Rev. F. D. Maurice. (L. Dickinson.)

Like, and good; an entirely well-meant and well-wrought portrait; coming a little hard, in consequence of the endeavour to paint all the expression of an expressive face; but it is a good fault. Our portraits are in general wanting in power, owing to a misunderstanding of Sir Joshua; and the idea that his playful tenderness and easy precision are imitable by slovenliness.

Generally speaking, portraiture may be divided into three great schools: the greatest is the Venetian, headed by Titian, and entirely right; on one side of it, is the German school, headed by Holbein, erring slightly on the side of intenseness and force of definition; on the other side of it, the English school, headed by Sir Joshua, erring slightly on the side of facility and grace of abstraction.* Now, the Vene-

* For the sake of simplicity of conception, Velasquez must be classed with the Venetians, to whom he belongs in right of his style, and Vandyck with the English: in fact, he, with Sir Joshua and Gainsborough, constitute the whole school.

tians and Sir Joshua are, for the present, wholly inimitable; but Holbein is imitable, and is the best model for us.

609. The King's Orchard. (A. Hughes.)

Mr. Hughes' exquisite sense of colour and delicacy of design are seen to less advantage than usual. He has been allowing himself to go astray by indulging too much in his chief delight of colour; and this picture, which was quite lovely when I saw it last year incomplete, is now throughout too gay, and wanting in sweetness of shade; but most accomplished and delicious in detached passages; and the apple-blossom, among all its ruddy rivals on the walls this year, is tenderly, but triumphantly, victorious—it is the only blossom which is soft enough in texture, or round enough in bud. There is the making of a magnificent painter in Mr. Hughes: but he must for some time yet, stoop to conquer; be content with cottagers' instead of kings' orchards, and bow to the perhaps distressing, but assured fact, that a picture can be no more wholly splendid than it can be wholly white.

900. Too Late. (W. L. Windus.)

Something wrong here: either this painter has been ill;* or his picture has been sent in to the Academy in a hurry; or he has sickened his temper and dimmed his sight by reading melancholy ballads.

* I fear this has been the fact. See the postscript, at the end of these pages.

There is great grandeur in the work; but it cannot for a moment be compared with Burd Helen. On the whole, young painters must remember this great fact, that painting, as a mere physical exertion, requires the utmost possible strength of constitution and of heart. A stout arm, a calm mind, a merry heart, and a bright eye are essential to a great painter. Without all these he can, in a great and immortal way, do nothing.

Wherefore, all puling and pining over deserted ladies, and knights run through the body, is, to the high artistic faculty, just so much poison. Frequent the company of right-minded and nobly-souled persons; learn all athletic exercises, and all delicate arts; music more especially; torment yourself neither with fine philosophy nor impatient philanthropy—but be kind and just to everybody; rise in the morning with the lark, and whistle in the evening with the blackbird; and in time you may be a painter. Not otherwise.

908. Val d'Aosta. (J. Brett.)

Yes, here we have it at last—some close-coming to it at least—historical landscape, properly so called,—landscape painting with a meaning and a use. We have had hitherto plenty of industry, precision quite unlimited—but all useless, or nearly so, being wasted on scenes of no majesty or enduring interest. Here is, at last, a scene worth painting—painted with all our might; (not quite with all our heart, perhaps, but with might of hand and eye). And here,

accordingly, for the first time in history, we have, by help of art, the power of visiting a place, reasoning about it, and knowing it, just as if we were there, except only that we cannot stir from our place, nor look behind us. For the rest, standing before this picture is just as good as standing on that spot in Val d'Aosta, so far as gaining of knowledge is concerned; and perhaps in some degree pleasanter, for it would be very hot on that rock to-day, and there would probably be a disagreeable smell of juniper plants growing on the slopes above.

So if any simple-minded, quietly-living person, indisposed towards railroad stations or crowded inns, cares to know in an untroubled and uncostly way what a Piedmontese valley is like in July, there it is for him. Rocks overlaid with velvet and fur to stand on in the first place. If you look close into the velvet you will find it is jewelled and set with stars in a stately way. White poplars by the roadside, shaking silvery in the wind. I regret to say the wind is apt to come up the Val d'Aosta in an ill-tempered and rude manner, turning leaves thus the wrong side out; but it will be over in a moment. Beyond the poplars you may see the slopes of arable and vineyard ground, such as give the wealth and life to Italy which she idly trusts in. Ground laid ages ago in wreaths, like new cut hay by the mountain streams, now terraced and trimmed into all gentle service. If you want to know what vines look like under Italian training (far from the best), *that* is the look of them—the dark spots and irregular cavities, seen through the broken

green of their square-set ranks, distinguishing them at any distance from the continuous pale fields of low set staff and leaf, divided by no gaps of gloom, which clothe a true vine country. There, down in the mid-valley, you see what pasture and meadow-land we have, we Piedmontese, with our hamlet and cottage life, and groups of glorious wood. Just beyond the rock are two splendid sweet chesnut trees, with forming fruit, good for making bread of, no less than maize; lower down, far to the left, a furlong or two of the main stream with its white shore and alders: not beautiful, for it has come down into all this fair country from the Cormayeur glaciers, and is yet untamed, cold, and furious, incapable of rest. But above, there is rest, where the sunshine streams into iridescence through branches of pine, and turns the pastures into strange golden clouds, half grass half dew; for the shadows of the great hills have kept the dew there since morning. Rest also, calm enough, among the ridges of rock and forest that heap themselves into that purple pyramid, high on the right. Look well into the making of it—it is indeed so, that a great mountain is built and bears itself, and its forest fringes, and village jewels—for those white spots far up the ravine are villages—and peasant dynasties are hidden among the film of blue. And above all are other more desolate dynasties—the crowns that cannot shake—of jagged rock; they also true and right, even to their finest serration. So it is, that the snow lies on those dark diadems for ever. A notable picture truly; a possession of much within a few feet square.

Yet not, in the strong, essential meaning of the word, a noble picture. It has a strange fault, considering the school to which it belongs,—it seems to me wholly emotionless. I cannot find from it that the painter loved, or feared, anything in all that wonderful piece of the world. There seems to me no awe of the mountains there—no real love of the chesnuts or the vines. Keeness of eye and fineness of hand as much as you choose; but of emotion, or of intention, nothing traceable. Not but that I believe the painter to be capable of the highest emotion: anyone who can paint thus must have passion within him; but the passion here is assuredly not out of him. He has cared for nothing, except as it was more or less pretty in colour and form. I never saw the mirror so held up to nature: but it is Mirror's work, not Man's. This absence of sentiment is peculiarly indicated by the feeble anger of the sky. Had it been wholly cloudless—burning down in one calm field of light behind the purple hills, all the rest of the landscape would have been gathered into unity by its repose; and for the sleeping girl we should have feared no other disturbance than the bleating of the favourite of her flock, who has returned to seek her—his companions wandering forgetful: but now she will be comfortlessly waked by hailstorm in another quarter of an hour: and yet there is no majesty in the clouds, nor any grand incumbency of them on the hills; they are but a dash of mist, gusty and disagreeable enough—in no otherwise to be dreaded; highly un-divine clouds—incognizant of Olympus—

what have they to do here upon the hill thrones—
κορυφαῖς ἰεραῖς χιονοβλήτοις.

Historical landscape it is, unquestionably; meteorological also; poetical—by no means: yet precious, in its patient way; and, as a wonder of toil and delicate handling, unimpeachable. There is no such subtle and precise work on any other canvas here. The chesnut-trees are like a finished design of Durer's; every leaf a study: the poplar trunks and boughs drawn with an unexampled exquisiteness of texture and curve. And if it does not touch you at first, stay by it a little—look well at the cottage among the meadows—think of all that this Italian life might be among these sacred hills, and of what Italian life has been, and yet is, in spite of silver crosses on the breast, and how far it is your fault and mine that this is so: and the picture may be serviceable to you in quite other ways than by pleasing your eyes with purple and gold.

POSTSCRIPT.

It is one of the most difficult and painful duties which I have to perform in these Notes, to guard the public against supposing that works executed under circumstances accidentally unfavourable, are characteristic of a school, without at the same time hurting the artist's feelings deeply, just when all discouragement is most dangerous to him. I cannot, in justice to the pre-Raphaelite school, allow Mr. Windus' pic-

ture—he being one of its chief leaders—to be looked upon as an example of what that school may achieve; but I trust that he will accept the assurance of my deep respect for his genius; and of my conviction that, with returning strength, he may one day take highest rank among masters of expression.

By inadvertency, I omitted in the arrangement of these detached notes, the reference made to Mr. Campbell's wonderful and all but perfect study, "Our Village Clockmaker" (14), full of various power; but perhaps challenging difficulties of detail too manifestly: and to Mr. Calderon's "Lost and Found" (634), which, if the face of the mother had been but a little more beautiful, would have been one of the most touching, as it is one of the most able, pictures of the year.

I cannot criticise my friend Mr. Watts' picture, "Isabella" (438); it is full of beauty and thoughtfulness. I have no doubt that he knows its faults better than I do; and they are so slight that the public ought not to see them, but to admire it with all their hearts.

WATER COLOUR SOCIETIES.

A somewhat singular circumstance has taken place this year, in the choice of their principal or masterpiece by two important societies of English artists.

The Society of British Artists placed, as the central attraction of their rooms, an illustration of Shakespeare.* The New Water Colour Society honoured with a similarly central position an illustration of Tennyson.†

Duly allowing for privileges of seniority and presidentship, it would not be just towards either body of artists, if we supposed that the places assigned to these works of art were entirely trustworthy indications of the estimate formed of them. But whether promoted by law, by courtesy, or by admiration, those pictures stood forth to the English—and more than the English, public—as in some central or typical way exponents of the power of the two societies; and foreigners, at least, would be justified in concluding that the sanction given by two important bodies of English painters to these readings of the greatest

* No. 53. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. (F. Y. Hurlstone.)

† No. 212. A Dream of Fair Women. (E. H. Corbould.) The illustrations of Shakespeare by Mr. Gilbert, which occupy a conspicuous position (on each side of Mr. Burton's centre piece) in the rooms of the Old Water Colour Society, curiously involve that society also in a parallel manifestation of opinion.

dead, and greatest living, English poets, indicated with some truth the measure of general understanding of poetry in the artist mind of the country; and perhaps also (as the appeal to public judgment was made so frankly) something of the public mind of this country on the same matter.

I am not going to criticise those pictures. If the reader is not of my mind about them, I should not have any hope of being able to make him so—nor even any wish to make him so. If he *is* of my mind about them, he will understand why they should have set me thinking—not on the whole pleasantly—of the course and probable prospects of the curious group of English Personages to whom art now addresses itself. For it would not be difficult to show, if necessary, that these two works do verily express the final and entirely typical issue of the most popular modern views on the subject of poetry in general: and more than this, there is a certain typical character even in the hero and heroines of the pictures—the “Hamlet,” not unworthily representing what is popularly considered as Philosophy; the “Jephthah’s Daughter,” what is popularly accepted as Piety; and the “Cleopatra,” what is popularly displayed as Splendour.

Or, in a nearer and narrower view, these pictures contain a concentrated expression of the character which distinguishes a modern English exhibition of paintings from every other that has yet been, or is likely to be. Bad painting is to be found in abundance everywhere, so that we do not distinguish ourselves by our weakness; foolish painting in greater

abundance still, so that we do not distinguish ourselves by our imbecility; more or less meritorious painting, at least in all principal French and German schools, as well as in ours, so that we do not distinguish ourselves by our merit: but purely and wholly vulgar painting is not to be found developing itself elsewhere with the same naïveté as among the English, and we *do* distinguish ourselves by our vulgarity. So, at least, it appears to me. As I have just said, I do not wish to argue with any one who disputes the fact, but to trace thence one or two conclusions with those who admit it.

What vulgarity is, whether in manners, acts, or conceptions, most well-educated persons understand; but what it consists in, or arises from, is a more difficult question. I believe that on strict analysis it will be found definable as “the habit of mind and act resulting from the prolonged combination of insensibility with insincerity:”* and I think the special manifestation of it among artists has resulted,

* It would be more accurate to say, “constitutional insensibility;” for people are born vulgar, or not vulgar, irrevocably. An apparent insensibility may often be caused by one strong feeling quenching or conquering another; and this to the extent of involving the person in all kinds of cruelty and crime—yet, Borgia, or Ezzelin, lady and knight still; while the born clown is dead in all sensation and capacity of thought, whatever his acts or life may be.

Cloten, in “Cymbeline,” is the most perfect study of pure vulgarity which I know in literature; Perdita, in “Winter’s Tale,” the most perfect study of its opposite (irrespective of such higher virtue or intellect as we have in Desdemona or Portia). Perdita’s exquisite openness, joined with as exquisite sensitiveness, constitute the precise opposite of the apathetic insincerity which, I believe, is the essence of vulgarity.

in the first place, from the withdrawal of all right, and therefore all softening or animating, motive for their work; and, in the second place, from the habit of assuming, or striving by rule to express, feelings which did not, and could not, arise out of their work under such conditions.

I say first, by the withdrawal of all softening or animating motive, and chiefly by the loss of belief in the spiritual world. Art has never shown, in any corner of the earth, a condition of advancing strength but under this influence. I do not say, observe, influence of "religion," but merely of a belief in some invisible power—god or goddess, fury or fate, saint or demon. Where such belief existed, however sunk or distorted, progressive art has been possible, otherwise impossible. The distortion of the belief, its contraction or its incoherence, contract or compress the resultant art; still the art is evermore of another and mightier race than the art of materialism. Be so much of a Pythagorean as to believe in something awful and impenetrable connected with beans, and forthwith you are not weaker, but stronger, than your kitchenmaid, who perceives in them only an adaptability to being boiled. Be so much of an Egyptian as to believe that some god made hawks, and bears up their wings for them on the wind, and looks for ever through the fierce light of their eyes, that therefore it is not good to slay hawks; and some day you may be able to paint a hawk quite otherwise than will be possible to you by any persistency in slaughter or dissection, or help of any quantity of stuffing and glass beads in thorax or

eye-socket. Be so much of a Jew as to believe that there is a great Spirit who makes the tempests his true messengers, and the flaming fire his true servant, and lays the beams of his chambers upon the unshrinking sea, and you will paint the cloud, and the fire, and the wave, otherwise, and on the whole better, than in any state of modern enlightenment as to the composition of caloric or protoxide of hydrogen. Or, finally, be so much of a human creature as to care about the heart and history of fellow-creatures, and to take so much concern with the facts of human life going on around you as shall make your art in some sort compassionate, exhortant, or communicative: and useful to any one coming after you, either as a record of what was done among men in your day, or as a testimony of what you felt or knew concerning them and their misdoings or undoings: and this love and dwelling in the spirits of other creatures will give a glory to your work quite unattainable by observance of any proportions of arms and collar-bones hitherto stated by professors of Man-painting. All this is irrevocably so; and since, as a nation concerning itself with art, we have wholly rejected these heathenish, Jewish, and other such beliefs; and have accepted, for things worshipful, absolutely nothing but pairs of ourselves; taking for exclusive idols, gods, or objects of veneration, the infinitesimal points of humanity, Mr. and Mrs. P., and the Misses and Master P.'s;—out, I say, of this highly punctuated religion, which comes to its full stop and note of admiration after the family name, we shall get nothing,—*can* get nothing,

but such issues as we see here. The whole temper of former art was in some way reverential—had awe in it: no matter how carefully or conventionally the workman ruled and wrought the psalter page, he had every now and then a far away feeling that it was to be prayed out of—somebody would pray out of it some day—not entirely mechanically, nor by slip of bead. No matter how many madonnas he painted to order from the same outlines; the sense that the worst of them was sure, late or soon, to be looked up to through tears, could not but thrill through him as he arched the brow and animated the smile: nay, if he was but a poor armourer or enameller, the feeling that those chased traceries of cuish and helmet would be one day embossed in hot purple, deeper, perhaps, through fault of his, would every now and then make his hammer smite with sterner, truer tone: awe and pity ruling over all his doings, such as now are unattainable. For Mr. and Mrs. P. are not in that sense awful—not in that sense pitiable: both—in another and deeper sense, but not in this.

Then the second source of the evil is the endeavour to assume the sentiment which we cannot possibly have. Let us accept our position; and good scientific, or diagrammatic, or politely personal and domestic art is still possible to us;—still may be made, if not majestic work, yet real work. There is use in a good geological diagram; and there is good riding in Rotten-row, to be seen any day between four and six; but if we profess to paint ghosts, when we believe in no immortality;—

or Iphigenias and daughters of Jephthah, when we believe in no Deity—this is what we come to: not but that even ghosts are indeed still to be seen, and Iphigenias found (though perhaps sacrificed not altogether to Diana) by sharp-sighted persons—upon occasion.

It may be thought, I speak too seriously—or speak seriously in the wrong place—of this matter. I do not. The pictures are ludicrous enough. That which they signify is not ludicrous. And, as if to make us think out their signification fully, the Tennyson picture has a companion—an opposite at least—another illustration of English poetry by English art. The gate of Eden, with a Peri at it—an interesting scene to people who believe in Eden. We suppose ourselves to be rather nearer that gate—do not we?—than any of the old shepherds who saw ladders set to it in their dreams. And this is the aspect assumed by the gate, and the aspect of the angels in—or outside of it—upon such closer acquaintance. A “strait gate” truly.

This being so, I cannot enter with any pleasure into examination of the works of the two Water Colour Societies this year. For in their very nature those two societies appeal to the insensitiveness and pretence of the public: insensitiveness, because no refined eye could bear with the glaring colours, and blotted or dashed forms, which are the staple of modern water-colour work; and pretence, because this system of painting is principally supported by the idle amateurs who concern themselves about art without being truly interested in it; and by pupils of the various water-colour masters;

who enjoy being taught to sketch brilliantly in six lessons.

In spite of all the apparent exertion, and reflex of pre-Raphaelite minuteness from the schools above them, the Water Colour Societies are in steady descent. They were founded first on a true and simple school of broad light and shade,—grey touched with golden colour on the lights. This, with clear and delicate washes for its transparent tones, was the method of all the earlier men; and the sincere love of nature which existed in the hearts of the first water colour masters—Girtin, Consens, Robson, Copley Fielding, Cox, Prout, and De Wint—formed a true and progressive school, till Hunt, the greatest of all, perfected his art. Hunt and Cox alone are left of all that group, and their works in the Old Water Colour are the only ones which are now seriously worth looking at; for in the endeavour to employ new resources, to rival oil colour, and to display facility, mere method has superseded all feeling and all wholesome aim, and has itself become finally degraded. The sponge and handkerchief have destroyed water colour painting; and I believe there are now only two courses open to its younger students—either to “hark back” at once to the old grey schools, and ground themselves again firmly on chiaroscuro studies with the flat grey wash, or to take William Hunt for their only master, and resolve that they will be able to paint a piece of leafage and fruit approximately well in his way before they try even the smallest piece of landscape. If they want to follow Turner, the first course is the only one. Steady grey and yellow for ten

years, and lead pencil point all your life, or no "Turnerism." No "dodge" will ever enable you otherwise to get round that corner. Those are the terms of the thing; we may accept or not as we choose, but there are no others. I name, however, a few of the works in the rooms of the two societies, which are at least indicative of power to do well, if the painters choose.

In the New Water Colour, Mr. Warren's "Lost in the Woods" (88), and "Avenue" (228), are good instances of deceptive painting—scene-painting on a small scale—the treatment of the light through the leaf interstices being skilfully correspondent with photographic effects. There is no refined work or feeling in them, but they are careful and ingenious; and their webs of leafage are pleasant fly-traps to draw public attention, which, perhaps, after receiving, Mr. Warren may be able to justify by work better worthy of it.

In Mr. Cooke's "Hartland Point" (50), the sense of the low trickling of the rivulets of tide through infinite stones is very delightful; alternate rippling and resting of the confined, shallow, wandering water, that hardly will be at the trouble of getting down through the shingle, when it has to come up again over it soon. There are beautiful passages of atmosphere in this, as in all Mr. Cooke's drawings this year. The companion studies of morning and evening, on the same cliff (2 and 6), suggest a pretty idea, but not quite successfully. The contrast is not carried far enough in minor details.

Mr. Telbin's "Dovedale" (208) is very delightful:

on the whole it seems to me the sweetest and rightest thing in the room, but scattered in subject. A pretty place, certainly, but incoherent; neither dark, nor light;—quiet, nor disquieted;—tame, nor wild, but tenderly chaotic and insipid—suggestive, to me at least, of nothing but going on to see if nothing better is to be found. The sensation, perhaps, is increased by the oval shape—not a wise one for a landscape; where one wants to know accurately the difference between slope and vertical, as bearing much on the sublimities of some things, and the moral characters of others.

Lastly, Mr. Rowbotham's "East Cliff" (268) is an earnest and admirable study; strong in discipline, and full of fact, but hard. Neither the sweetest colours nor the subtlest forms have been seen—in fact, the heart of the cliff is not opened yet; but its muscular development is right. Yet it is costly drawing this, in attention, considering what water colour work is usually; and the timbers and other *materiel* are well set in serviceable places. The painter must have felt himself braced after such work, and forwarded, in many ways.

In the rooms of the Old Water Colour Society, the first thing to be looked at should be Mr. Hunt's marvellous fruit piece, No. 261. It seems to me almost the exquisitest I have ever seen, in the glowing grey of the bosses of the pine, and sweeping curves of its leaves. After that, David Cox's magnificent waterfall, at the upper end of the room—unsurpassable in its own broad way, and giving, in the foam,

examples of execution as broad as Salvator's, and infinitely more subtle and lovely. Then, everything else of David Cox's in the room, especially 274. Next, Mr. Newton's "Snow Scene," 181, which is very good; but the good of it might be got in a daguerreotype as well, and Mr. Newton can do better than a daguerreotype if he likes. We may well, however, look for his drawings round the room; all have something in them. The Inverness-shire moonlight (213) is especially good. And then follow round Mr. Naftel (who has made swift advance this year), in the same way, beginning with the beautiful bit of retiring mountain and glittering fern, No. 183; and staying long at No. 44, a notable study of smooth-sculptured torrent bed and flushed hill side; look also at the rolling clouds in Mr. Turner's "Ben Cruachan" (48), which are the truest clouds in the whole room. Then, give as much time as you can to Mr. Jackson's "Bamborough" (170), and to Mr. Smith's "Chillon" (91); both of them quiet and sincere. Chillon, the least bit too red, but the purple towers in shade very good; and the gradations of light in the distance admirable. And it must not be through any importunity of mine if you stay longer; for the rest of the works here are, indeed, some very pretty, and some entertaining, and many very clever; but hardly, so far as I see, calculated either to form our taste or advance our knowledge.

FRENCH EXHIBITION.

6. Cherry-seller of Port l'Abbé, Brittany.

Very powerful and systematic in handling; right in form and gesture, and, up to its attempted point, in colour—only the beauty of girls and cherries missed. French girls, the sweetest tempered living creatures in the world, are not obliged to Monsieur Antigua for his representation of their countenances to the English, as they appear either here or in No. 5 opposite (also a clever work), while “the pet squirrel” (4), though full of power, is entirely ignoble in its conception of girlhood. Respecting No. 1, it seems to me, we English might ask—“Is it so rare a thing in France to hold your umbrella over somebody else in a shower as to induce the person so generously protected always to kiss the hem of your robe?” I carried a bag of nuts, as big as an ordinary coal-sack, a mile up hill, from hedge to home, for a tired Lucernoise old woman the other day, getting in return kind thanks indeed, but no pictorial effects of this kind.

57. The Toilet. (Edward Frère.)

This, with 59 and 60, is worthy of the painter, which is saying much; but there is no advance on

previous effort. The "Student," exhibited in 57, contained higher qualities of painting than any shown in the pictures of this year; and, which is a matter of much sorrow to me, I think the faces are on the whole less lovely than they were; quite as right and deep in expression, but some of their pure beauty lost: this is especially so in the face of the taller girl in 61.

I hear some complaints among the art-talk of the year, respecting the "monotony" of Frère's pictures. But rustic life is not, it should be remembered, on the whole an exciting matter. The superiors of the poor rustics occasionally procure them some excitement—in the way of roof-burning, or starvation; or bayonet, instead of spade agriculture,—with supply of richer manure to their fields than usual. But as Frère has seen it (and he paints only what he has seen), this cottage life, with its morning and evening prayer, and mid-day pottage, is a quiet business. You will not, I believe, get any disquietude from him. There is plenty brewing for us—subjects for historical painting of dramatic interest enough, on the horizon. For the present, we will give our sympathy to the "Cut Finger," and to the tender little Florence, who binds it up, and be content.

91*a*. Bavarian Policemen, &c. (Louis Knaus.)

A most powerful work, full of entirely right expression, alike in feature and gesture. The distant figures at the opening of the wood are among the

most wonderful pieces of complete drawing in a faint tone which I have ever seen; and there is handling in the faces throughout, which, though much inferior to Hogarth in colour, and in deep conception of feeling, approaches him in expressive skill (perhaps there is more resemblance to him in the companion picture, 91*c*, than in this). The painting is everywhere vigorous, but fails, as I have said, in colour, especially in the flesh. Gypsies have indeed dark skins, but they have bright life beneath them; here we have only gypsy mahogany, not gypsy blood. The dog and monkey, however, are perfect—I think, in unexaggerated truth of action and expression, better than Landseer's work. A most notable picture it seems to me, though not a profound one; but its superficial qualities are of the rarest kind. The other, 91*b*, is rather deeper—at least in the dignity of the offended and hopeless wife—but it is coarse in colour.

147. A Country Fair in France. (C. Troyon.)

There is much cleverness in this picture, but it is painted on a totally false principle, which is doing so much mischief to the whole French school that I trust I may be pardoned for pointing it out very distinctly.

Chiaroscuro is a very noble subject of study; but it is not so noble a study as human nature: nor is it the subject which should mainly occupy our thoughts when we have human nature before us. Generally, we ought to see more in man or woman than that

their foreheads come dark against the sky, or their petticoats and pantaloons white against it. If we see nothing but this, and think of nothing else in the company of our fellow creatures but the depth of their shadows, we are assuredly in such insensitive state of mind as must render all true painting impossible to us. It may be the most important thing about a pollard willow that it comes greyly against a cloud, or gloomily out of a pool. But respecting a man, his greyness or opacity are not the principal facts which it is desirable to state of him. If you cannot see his human beauty, and have no sympathy with his mind, don't paint him. Go and paint logs, or stones, or weeds ;—you will not, indeed, paint even these at all supremely, for *their* best beauty is also in a sort human : nevertheless you will not insult them, as you do living creatures, by perceiving in them only opacity. Immense harm has been done in this matter by the popular misunderstanding of Rembrandt—for Rembrandt's strength is in rendering of human character—not in chiaroscuro. Rembrandt's chiaroscuro is always forced—generally false, and wholly vulgar : it is in all possible ways inferior, *as* chiaroscuro, to Correggio's, Titian's, Tintoret's, Veronese's, or Velasquez's. But in rendering human character, such as he saw about him, Rembrandt is nearly equal to any of these men, and the real power of him is in his stern and steady touch on lip and brow—seen best in his lightest etchings—or in the lightest parts of the handling of his portraits, the head of the Jew in our own gallery being about as

good and thorough work as it is possible to see of his. And when this is so, and the great qualities of character and of form are first secured—after them, and in due subordination to them—chiaroscuro and everything else will come rightly and gloriously; and they always do come in such order; no chiaroscuro ever was good, as such, which was not subordinate to character and to form; and all search after it as a first object ends in the loss of the thing itself so sought. One of our English painters, Constable, professed this pursuit in its simplicity. “Though my pictures should have nothing else, they shall have chiaroscuro.” The sacrifice was accepted by the Fates, but the prayer denied. His pictures *had* nothing else; but they had *not* chiaroscuro.

SOCIETY OF BRITISH ARTISTS.

I see no distinctive reason for noting any of the works in the room at Suffolk-street (though many of them meritorious in their usual way,) except only Mr. Baxter's "Red Riding Hood" (158), and Mr. Roberts' "Child at Play" (48), and "Opinion of the Press" (173). Of these, the first showed, I thought, a great gift of painting, and great feeling for beauty, if the painter will not try to imitate the superficial qualities of Reynolds more than the sterling ones. The two works by Mr. W. Roberts are interesting; not, indeed, for absolute perfection of attainment, but for their fidelity of light and shade; many pictures are more brilliant; but it is rare to find any so equally studied and harmoniously balanced in all parts; no bits of colour painted at inconsistent times, or in a changed temper, and therefore discordant. Few people would believe, for instance, that the strong orange touch on the girl's shoulder, in No. 48, was indeed the faithful representation of sunlight reflected at that angle from a purple dress; but so it is, and all the other pieces of effect are as earnestly watched and rendered,* and the figure of the little girl very gracefully designed.

It may not be out of place, in noticing the sentiment of No. 173, which is well and graphically expressed, to warn young painters against attaching

* Except the extreme distance, which is sunless.

too much importance to press criticism as an influence on their fortunes. If sharp and telling, it is a disagreeable thing to look at, when just damp from the type; and it is certainly in an unpleasantly convenient form for one's friends to carry about in their pockets. But, ultimately, it is quite powerless, except so far as it concurs with general public opinion. I have never yet seen even a bad picture crushed by criticism, much less a good one. The sale of a given work may, indeed, be checked, or prevented; but so it may by a whisper, or a chance touch of the elbow. I have seen more real mischief and definite injury to property done in ten minutes by an idle coxcomb amusing his party, than could possibly be done by all the malice in type that could be got into the journals of a season. The printed malice only makes people look at the picture; the fool's jest makes them pass it. And though public taste is capricious enough—and erroneous enough—so as to make it very difficult to say how it is to be strongly wrought upon, yet let all young painters be assured of this—that *an absolutely good painting is always sure of sale*. If they choose to offend the public by wanton eccentricity, or easily avoidable error, they have only themselves to blame when the public loses its temper and passes their real merits without notice. The charity of artists is in condescending to please; and they deservedly suffer when they have it not. A great and good musician lowers his voice when he sings in a sick room, and raises it when he has to fill the theatre; he will sing lightly for the child, and simply

for the uninstructed, but nobly and gloriously for all. So also a great painter can show his majesty in nothing more than by securing, in timely gentleness, empire over all hearts. It is only his petulance, or his pride—not his power—which will alienate the eyes of men: if Veronese rose now among us, or Correggio, there would be at first a wondering, attentive silence—not a murmur heard against them: and presently they would make the very streets ring for joy, and every lip laugh with acclamation; not because their essential power could be perceived by all—or by one in a thousand of all—but because, up to the point of possible perception, it would be made loveable by all.

I repeat, therefore, to the young painter, in all distinctness and completeness, this assurance: Do your work well, and kindly, and no enemy can harm you. So soon as your picture deserves to be bought, it will be bought. If, indeed, you want to live by your art before you have learned it; or to sell what you know to be worthless, by catching the fancy of the purchaser; or to display your own dexterity, instead of truth of facts; or to preach to people, instead of pleasing them: in each and all of these cases you must take the chances of your speculation, or the penalty of your presumption. There are, indeed, some things you may preach without presumption; only, do not expect to be paid for your sermons: for people will pay richly for being pleased—scarcely, if at all, for being rebuked.

65, Cornhill, London, May, 1859.

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